1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

considered rather shameless, is not stigmatised as incestuous or even immoral, and there are no sanctions against it. The boy is meant to respect the name of 'mother', but whether he does or not, 'depends entirely on the hearts of the two people concerned.'

A Lepcha is expected to respect his parents and grand-parents, his parents-in-law, and his sons- and daughters-in-law. Of these 'respect-full' situations by far the most important is that between a Lepcha and his parents-in-law. A person is more respectful to his spouse's parents than to his own; he uses more honorific words to them and is careful never to use directly obscene language in front of them. A person must never witness his parents-in-law copulating nor must he be seen doing so by them. Should either of these situations arise the elders will be ashamed and angry.

The tensest of all situations, and one which lasts during the whole life-time of both parties is the relation between a man and his wife's mother, and a woman and her husband's father. These relationships are always rather strained and uncomfortable. If for instance a man's mother-in-law says something immodest, the man himself will feel uncomfortable, and may get up and go away. For a man the situation is most uncomfortable in the period between his betrothal and his bringing his wife home. During that period he has to spend about half his time in his father-in-law's home, helping him in his work; he is almost treated as a servant, under the orders of his father-in-law, and has to be modest and circumspect in his speech and behaviour; the male relations of his wife on the other hand have complete licence to tease him as much as they will and to use every sort of obscene term; if he is provoked into answering back he is humiliated. A woman when she first comes to her husband's house is also delicately situated; but after the actual marriage feast there is no licenced teasing of the bride and, if she is living continually in the same house as her father-in-law, the strain, though it never quite wears off, is considerably lessened. Once he has brought his wife home a man still has to avoid the crudest sexual phrases in front of his parents-in-law; but it is considered a rather amusing and risky game to sail as near the wind as possible.

In theory equal modesty of speech and behaviour should be shown in front of one's own parents and siblings of the opposite sex, but in point of fact in Zongu it is not; one of the things that most shocked our Lepcha servants, who came from the mixed

1: Gorer J-5 (1937).1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

593 184 community of Gangtok, was that parent and child, brother and sister, would joke and act without the least restraint in one another's presence. In fact the Gangtok Lepchas dubbed their brothers of Zongu shameless and uncivilised. Obscene remarks, gestures and actions are never directed towards people nearly related; but the presence of such people is no restraint. Adult brothers and sisters should not, and on the whole do not, touch one another except in cases of actual necessity, such as helping a person at work or if they are ill. This prohibition does not extend to dressing [302 ●606] the hair, which can be performed by anybody for anybody else, with the exception of a son- or daughter-in-law and parent-in-law of the opposite sex.

ii

614 Every Lepcha belongs to a patrilineal clan or *ptso*, which is believed to have originated from some supernatural or legendary ancestor. Nowadays the chief function of the *ptso* is the regulation of marriage and the prevention of incest; it is, to all intents and purposes, an exogamic unit. In theory people of the same *ptso* are allowed to marry if they are separated by nine generations from a common ancestor, and to indicate that a person of the same *ptso* is very far removed a Lepcha will always say 'we can marry'; but in point of fact I did not come upon nor hear of a single instance of two people of the same *ptso* marrying. It was generally stated that though such a marriage was permissive, people would feel shame in it.

It is allowable to marry back into a mother's *ptso* after four generations; but so near a connection is considered somewhat shameless. Datoop's father, the first Dorjé Lapoon, took as his second wife a woman he called 'aunt' (*a-nyou*); his grandmother was a sister of her mother. This marriage was considered quite shameless, and even nearly sixty years later was a subject for embarrassment; but it demanded no sanctions against it, such as would have been invoked if the connection had been on the father's side.

It seems to me possible that in former times the *ptso* represented a geographical unit; in the very small villages there is a tendency for all, or at any rate the majority, of the men to be members of the same *ptso*. But nowadays this has broken down (if indeed it was ever institutionalised) completely; in Lingthem there are male representatives of twelve *ptso*. Of these the most populous